

KOHL: The radio voice of Ohlone

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The world of Ohlone’s 89.3 KOHL radio station is far more intense than most students realize.

Not just a simple class taken only for credit, most students are surprised by the amount of homework required each night for “class;” granted, this homework is checking the latest sports scores, gossip of Hollywood, and fly news of Fremont and our nation’s affairs.

Apart from homework, much effort is given by the professors of the radio broadcasting department to teach students how to run a detailed system.

As much as radio is about the art of music, Ohlone director of radio operations, Robert Dochterman, said “You can’t mistake [radio] for art because at the end of the day, people have to get paid.”

Dochterman relates radio as a commerce and runs the station as such, giving students an opportunity to learn the expertise of radio in a professional, yet lab setting.

The station itself is licensed as a non-commercial, educational operation system. Hence, it is positioned as an alternative radio station, as opposed to a commercial station. This explains why commercials are never to be heard on KOHL.

Instead, there are public service announcements, also referred to as “spots”, wherein disk jockeys plug exposure for the stations donors and supporters. Also, the non-profit organization aspect of the station

along with the absence of real commercials are characteristic of non-commercial radio.

Typically, alternative radio embodies the idea of a grooving d.j. spontaneously playing live selections and independently chatting about his day and interesting news. At Ohlone’s radio station, however, more than just a radio personality and playlists are developed.

Because of the professional setting, over 300 former Ohlone students of the radio broadcasting program are on a list of successful radio program directors and disc jockeys. These up and coming professionals are taught by teaching staff who are also employed by other radio stations. In fact, some of the teachers own their own stations together throughout the Bay Area. Dochterman said that the challenge is teaching the professional how to teach his expertise.

According to the list of over 300 success stories, the professors are on the right track. A professional radio lab setting entails teaching students how to multi-task. A DJ who can run the production aspect, create and maintain a notable personality, and do little details such as doing his own pre-recorded voice tracks, is a much sought after person. The radio broadcasting department “makes students professionals when they leave,” according to Dochterman.

The basics of format, proper identification of the radio station, using continuing phrases (“This is Joe Blue at 89.3 KOHL”) are taught during the first few



Photo by Sean Crawford

Huda Shreim delivers an hourly traffic report.

weeks. Then, the incorporation of audience interaction via telephone is taught.

The importance of knowing the targeted audience is stressed. (KOHL targets men and women between the ages of 18-34.) Following audience awareness is learning to give the entertainment, or news. The voice must be trained

to not sound as though it is reading from a script, but a personality must be developed, instead. The conversation, as a result sounds natural.

One trick of the trade that is used by many radio stations, including KOHL, is voice tracks. Although the station tries live producing as much as possible, emergencies arise as does the demand for other priorities, such as determining future playlists.

Again, multi-tasking is greatly esteemed in the industry. It is for these reasons that software is used that allows the program to be scheduled one to two days in advance. It also allows the broadcaster to input his spoken parts at a time they accordingly.

Previous recorded conversations from listeners are also usually recorded and edited. All of this engineering is accomplished to sound as if it is a one man show.

Students are able to leave Ohlone with their expertise in hand. An air check record, or

recorded air time, along with a resume, is handed to radio station operation directors.

As previously noted, the 300 plus success stories of Ohlone’s radio broadcasting program are speaking for themselves across the air waves of the Bay Area.



Photo by Daniel Kwan

JJ Amaya, who has been with KOHL for over 25 years, uses the high-tech equipment in the studio to deliver music.

Ohlone bird repeller screaming across